

## ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Image data which includes a plurality of object unit  
image data arranged in time series, such as field images, is  
5 supplied from an image source. The object unit image data  
subjected to the smoothing process is divided into blocks of  
a predetermined size. Then, a difference between the object  
unit image data and preceding unit image data which is  
immediately before the object unit image data, and a difference  
10 between the object unit image data and subsequent unit image  
data which is immediately after the object unit image data are  
determined for a plurality of blocks, based on a pixel value.  
The object unit image data is smoothed with one of the preceding  
unit image data and the subsequent unit image data having a  
15 smaller difference. Thus, since the object unit image data  
is always smoothed with the unit image data having the smallest  
difference, effective noise elimination can be performed, with  
preventing an adverse effect caused by the smoothing.